

IN THE CLAIMS:

The status of the claims is as follows:

1. (currently amended) A fastener system for binding paper, comprising:
 - a base having spaced first and second ends;
 - a first prong extending from said first end;
 - a second prong extending from said second end;
 - a first member having a first opening for receiving said first prong, said first member including at least one aperture spaced from said first opening;and
 - a second member having a second opening for receiving said second prong, said second member including at least one projection spaced from said second opening, said projection ~~said first and second members~~ releasably securable within said aperture so that said first and second members to form a top lock.
2. (original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein each of said first and second prongs includes a side having a teeth extending therefrom.
3. (original) The fastener of claim 2, wherein each of said first and second openings includes an inwardly extending protrusion for releasably engaging said teeth, thereby releasably securing said first and second members at a selected distance from said base.

4. (currently amended) The fastener of claim 1, wherein said first member further
~~comprises includes~~ a plurality of spaced apertures spaced from said first opening.
5. (currently amended) The fastener of claim ~~4~~ 5, wherein said second member
includes a plurality of spaced projections, each of said projections further
~~comprises at least one projection~~ releasably securable within one of said
apertures.
6. (original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein said base comprises a first portion and
a second portion, said first and second portions releasably securable to form an
adjustable base.
7. (original) The fastener of claim 6, wherein said first portion further comprises a
plurality of apertures spaced from said first end.
8. (original) The fastener of claim 7, wherein said second portion further comprises
at least one projection releasably securable within one of said apertures.
9. (original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein said base is plastic.
10. (original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein said top lock is plastic.

11. (original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein said top lock is a flexible strap.

12. (original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein said first and second prongs are flexible.

13. (currently amended) A fastener system for binding papers, comprising:

a U-shaped member having a base and first and second prongs extending from said base;

a first L-shaped member having an first tubular leg with a longitudinally extending opening for receiving said first prong, and a second leg having at least one aperture; and

a second L-shaped member having a second tubular leg with a longitudinally extending opening for receiving said second prong, and a second leg having at least one projection releasably securable within said aperture of so that said first and second L-shaped members form a top lock to said second leg of said first L-shaped member.

14. (original) The fastener of claim 13, wherein said first and second prongs include teeth longitudinally extending along a side of each of said prongs.

15. (original) The fastener of claim 14, wherein each of said first and second tubular legs includes protrusions longitudinally extending inwardly relative to said opening for releasably engaging said teeth.

16. (currently amended) The fastener of claim 15, wherein said second leg of said first L-shaped member includes a plurality of spaced apertures.

17. (currently amended) The fastener of claim 16, wherein said second leg of said second L-shaped member includes a plurality of spaced projections, each of said projections at least one projection releasably securable within one of said apertures to form a top lock.

18. (original) The fastener of claim 17, wherein said top lock is flexible.

19. (original) The fastener of claim 17, wherein said top lock has an adjustable length.

20. (original) The fastener of claim 13, wherein said U-shaped member is plastic.

21. (original) The fastener of claim 13, wherein said first and second L-shaped members are plastic.

22. (currently amended) A method of securing a stack of papers, comprising the steps of:
providing a base having spaced first and second ends with a first prong extending from the first end and a second prong extending from the second end;

passing the prongs through spaced holes along an edge of at least one sheet of paper;

providing a first member having a first opening for receiving the first prong and a second member having a second opening for receiving the second prong;

passing the first prong through the first opening;

passing the second prong through the second opening; and

releasably securing the first and second members together to form a top lock **while adjusting the length of the top lock.**

23. (canceled)

24. (original) The method of claim 22, including the steps of:

providing a protrusion extending into the first opening;

rotating the first member until the protrusion engages teeth on the first prong, wherein the protrusion releasably locks to maintain the first member at a selected distance from the base.

25. (original) The method of claim 24, including the steps of:

providing a protrusion extending into the second opening;

rotating the second member until the protrusion engages teeth on the second prong, wherein the protrusion releasably locks to maintain the second member at a selected distance from the base.

26. (original) The method of claim 22, including the further steps of:

providing a base having a first portion releasably securable to a second portion;

securing the first and second portions to form an adjustable base having a selectable length.

27. (original) The method of claim 22, including the step of trimming the prongs to a selected length.